FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB OF BALLARAT

EXCURSION/NEWS SHEET

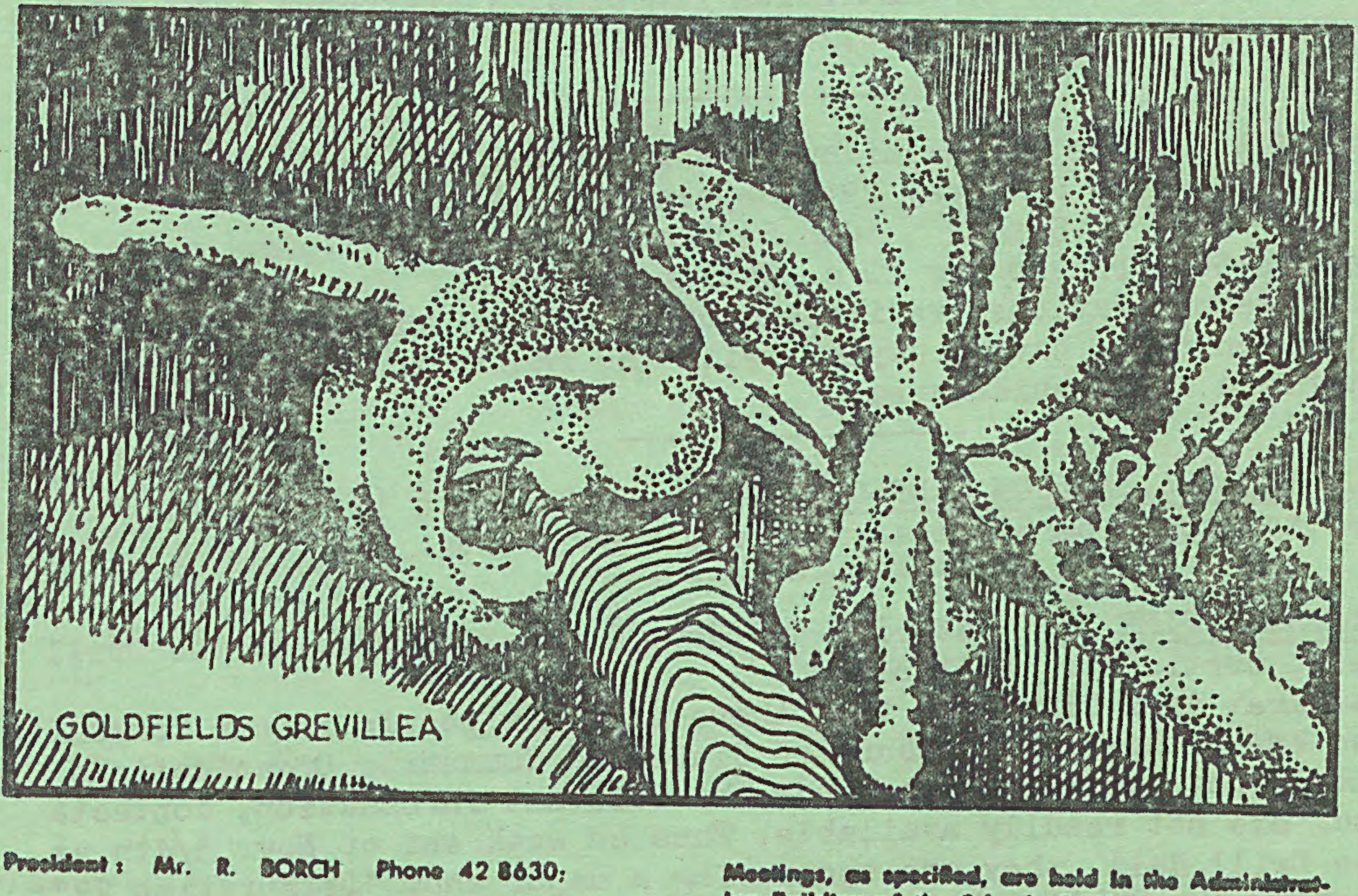
SEPTEMBER 1979.

Meeting 7th SEPTEMBER: Mr. E. Errey - The Family Proteaceae.

Meeting 5th OCTOBER: Dr. A. Neboiss - Aquatic Insects.

Excursion 9th SEPTEMBER: Mt. Egerton - E. Bedggood. Full day leave Crockers 9.30 a.m. Half day participants meet Egerton 1.30 p.m. (Watch for sign near cyprus tree).

Excursion SATURDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER: Dereel - L. Fink. Half day. 1.30 p.m.



GOLDFIELDS GREVILLEA

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Vice-President: Mr. G. BINNS Phone 32 3670;
Secretary: Miss H. BURGESS Phone 31 2210;
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Meetings, as specified, are held in the Administration Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 8 pm.

EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS, BALLARAT. AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS, OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

EXCURSION: 7th OCTOBER - Woady Yaloak - P. Fry, F. Harrap. Leaving Crocker's corner at 9.30 a.m.

EXCURSION: SATURDAY 27th OCTOBER - Fell Gully, Clunes Swamps. Leader G. Binns. Full day from Crockers at 9.30 a.m.

NEW MEMBERS: Welcomed at the August meeting were Linda Blood, Joy Adams, Lilian Dell, Jill McDonald and Charles Anderson. It is pleasing to see the Club expanding in this way, and we hope all new members will take an active part in the Club activities.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

WIMMERA GROUP SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS AND HORSHAM FIELD NATURALIST'S CLUB---

Garden Grown Native Flower Show and Environmental Display at the **HORSHAM HIGH SCHOOL HALL** Sunday 16th Sept. 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Monday 17th Sept. 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Featuring display on Australian Banksias, illustrated talks, films, audio visuals, varied displays. Adults 50c, Children 10c, Family $1.

"**ANGAIR**" Australian Wildflower Show and Art and Craft Display--
ANGLESEA HALL Saturday 29th September 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Sunday 30th September 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Adults 50c, Pensioners 20 c, Children 10 c.

Many demonstrations, varied exhibits, crafts for sale, and the opportunity to have a day out with the family in this lovely bushland and seaside area.

W.V.F.N.C.A. NELSON CAMP-OUT: October 12 - 14th 1979. Particulars from Secretary or Committee member.

"LEISURE TIME 79" Saturday 3rd Nov. Sunday 4th Nov. at the Drill Hall, Curtis St., Ballarat.

Ballarat Apex Club feel that there are many people in our Community who are prospective members of Clubs and Community Organizations but do not participate because the relevant information, contacts etc. are not readily available. Thus on week end of Nov. 3/4th at the Drill Hall, they are sponsoring a major show "Leisuretime 79"; to show the public what is available. Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat hope to have a stand at this function.

"PHOTOFLORA 1980" Monday 14th April 1980. Venue St. Paul's Hall, Victoria St. Ballarat. Further particulars at a later date.

THE PEREGRINE FALCON - A STUDY.

Ken Norris was our speaker on August 3rd. In an historical introduction, he surveyed the art of falconry from its origins 10,000 years B.C. when birds of prey were considered to be Gods in Egypt. In about 2,000 B.C., falconry was established in Central Asia, later spreading to Europe where it became the symbol of nobility, and confined to royalty and the aristocracy. Falcon eyries were managed to provide birds for sporting purposes rather than for the birds protection.

With the advent of the gun, interest in falconry tapered off. In the war years in Britain, falcons were destroyed because they attacked pigeons which could have been carrying messages. After the war, the peregrine falcon made a marked recovery and there may well have been 800 pairs and 800 nesting sites in use.

In the 50s came the decline of the peregrine in Europe and the U.S. Birds began to desert territories, eggs were deserted and broken and there was a dramatic fall in breeding success - the so called decline syndrome of the peregrine falcon and of other birds of prey. There was a marked reduction in shell thickness and an increase in pesticide levels in the eggs that did not hatch; the major pesticide being D.D.T. As a result the peregrine became extinct on the eastern seaboard and very rare in the rest of the U.S. except in Alaska and some of the remoter states. In the U.K. the reduction reached its worst in 1963. In 1975 a study was started in Victoria to establish the peregrine's status and to determine the effect of D.D.T. which was still being used.

Unlike the Northern hemisphere peregrines, the Australian birds were found to be nesting not only on cliffs but also in trees, frequently using other birds of prey nests e.g. wedge-tailed eagle nests in the Mallee.

In 1976 over 100 nesting sites were found in Victoria, distribution being especially good north of Melbourne and in the Grampians. Generally 2 or 3 eggs were laid, with 4 being a rare exception. The clutch of 4 in a hollow tree was well illustrated in Mr. Norris's slides with some excellent shots of the four fledglings all of which reached adulthood. The eggs take about four weeks to hatch and a further five weeks for the birds to mature. The females at 1000g weigh nearly half as much again as the males at 700g and take longer to reach maturity. During the period to maturity, the male parent does all the hunting. Galahs, pigeons and starlings were commonly taken with little cormorants and seagulls also being found at nest sites. Frequently a pair of peregrines would specialise, preying essentially on one particular species.

Levels of pesticides were determined on addled or unhatched eggs and reached as much as 17.6 ppm DDE (a DDT derivitive). Overseas 20 ppm DDE had been found to be a drastic limit in the loss of birds. The average reduction in shell thickness was of the order of 21%. In one year, 77 eggs were tested and it could be said that though the decline syndrome was not obvious in Victoria, the peregrines status was not secure.

Egg laying generally takes place in September, birds hatch in October and are fledged in November, with approximately 2 birds being reared per territory. Mortality is high in the first year approaching 60%; it is believed that the young birds are clumsy and many attacks are unsuccesful. The birds that survive this first year could well live for 20 years.

Mr. Norris discussed efforts in the U.S. to breed birds in captivity and then to release them in the wild; great horned owls and pigeon fanciers created problems!

In conclusion he said that while the peregrine in Victoria hadn't suffered as much as the Northern hemisphere birds, we must guard against further extended use of D.D.T. Dieldmis and other pesticides could also be a danger.

F. E. Harrap.

From the May 1979 "GEELONG NATURALIST" Mr. Boardman inquired if anyone had seen mistletoe growing on peppermint trees. (Please notify FNCB Secretary) He also asked if members had recently seen "rust balls" on acacias or wild cherries. These balls are between the size of an egg and a tennis ball, and the "rust" is difficult to remove from the skin.

FULL DAY EXCURSION TO TEDDINGTON RESERVOIR - AUGUST 5th 1979.

Four full car-loads of us left for Maryborough in cloudy weather. Main features along the way were the Golden Wattle (Acacia pycnantha) in full bloom, and the many honeyeaters amongst the eucalypts.

At Maryborough we were met by several members of that Club, and now eleven car-loads of us journeyed to Teddington Reservoir where we were joined by the Hoopers and the Murphys.

Everybody was hungry and lunch was enjoyed despite the continuous rain. After lunch we ventured to the McPherson Ranges area where much discussion ensued about the River Red Gums (E. camaldulensis) Yellow Gum (E. leucoxylon) Yellow Box (E. melliodora) and Red Stringy Bark (E. macrorhynca). There was plenty of discussion and disagreement between the experts as to the true identity of many of these trees.

From the McPherson Ranges our large convoy travelled to the West of England Lookout Ranges, in overcast conditions and steady rain. During wayside stops we saw rockferns (Cheilanthes tenuifolia), Pelargonium species, White heath (Leucopogon virgatus), Silky Hakea (H. sericea), Thin-leaved Wattle (A. aculeatissima), Scented Sundew (Drosera whittakeri), Hedge Wattle (A. armata), Early Nancy (Anguillaria dioica), Guinea Flower (Hibbertia exutiaces) and Spreading Wattle (A. genistifolia).

On to the look-out, and some disagreement as to the points of the compass. It was difficult to keep a sense of direction on the winding roads in low cloud.

And now to the Dalyenong Forest situated between Archdale and Dalyenong where Mr. Harold Beer from the Maryborough F.N.C. spoke of the history of the area and the attempt to have the area created a Special Purpose Reserve under the control of the Forests Commission. The roadside forest is of very special interest. It comprises a distinctive box forest of stunted growth, and a rich and diverse under-storey. Some of the flora we saw included Bearded Heath (Leucopogon virgatus), Peach Heath (Lissanthe strigosa), the rare Stiff Geebung (Persoonia rigida), Dwarf Greenhood (Pterostylus nana), Cat's Claws (Grevillea alpina), Daphne heath(Brachyloma daphnoides), Climbing Sundew (Drosera auriculata), Silky Hakea (H. sericea), Flame Heath (Astroloma conestephioides), Stinking Pennywort (Hydrocotyle laxiflora), Spreading Wattle (A. genistifolia), Bitter Cryptandra (C. amara), and many others.

The thanks of all who attended go to our guides Ken Hammond and Harold Beer, for a most enjoyable outing.

J. Netherway.

VIEW OBSTRUCTED BY THE TREES: From O. Moriarty, Association for Parks and Countryside Commissions of Australia.
(Concluding this report in the News Sheet of August 1979.)

The same figure, 8 per cent of good saw logs and 90% suitable only for woodchips, was found in the "derelict forests" at Eden.

Instead of derelict forests, we need vigorous young forests with both beauty and utility. Only by logging can that be achieved.

A learned ecological text from the U.S. recommends the management practice of cutting and burning to give good regeneration of redwood trees in State and national parks in California.

The excellent regeneration of redwoods after logging led Professor Dasmann to conclude in his book "Destruction of California" that the best of all conservationists were the lumbermen, the loggers and foresters. Professor Mellanby stated the same on his recent visits to Asutralia.

Contributed by H. Hooper.

NEOPHEMAS: (From Atlas Newsletter dated March 1979)

We are grateful to Leo Joseph for this article on identifying Neophemas. Simon Bennett added the information on immatures and thanks the National Museum of Victoria for allowing him access to specimens. The 7 Neophema parrots are endemic to Australia. They are quite small, about 20 cm long, and found in a wide variety of habitats in southern Australia ranging from windswept offshore islands and coastal areas to inland mulga and mallee scrubs. They fall into three natural groupings:

A. Bourke's Parrot (Neophema bourkii)
B. Blue-winged Parrot (N. chrysostoma)
   Elegant Parrot (N. elegans)
   Rock Parrot (N. petrophila)
   Orange-bellied Parrot (N. chrysogaster)
C. Turquoise Parrot (N. pulchella)
   Scarlet-breasted Parrot (N. splendida)

ORANGE-BELLIED PARROT:

IDENTIFICATION. It is distinguished from other species in the group by rich grass-green plumage, particularly noticeable on its upper parts; also by a unique buzzing call, often given in flight, which is completely unlike the shrill tinklings of the other species. Despite the vernacular and specific names, the orange abdomen, or belly, is not peculiar to this species - the other three in the group may show a small orange patch. Although this orange patch is undoubtedly most constant and extensive in this species, Orange-bellied Parrots should never be recorded on the basis of an orange abdomen alone.

Like the Blue-winged, it has only one shade of blue on the wing-coverts, though generally not as extensive as in the former. The lores are much greener than in the Elegant and Blue-winged. In summary, if you are looking at Neophemas and think they might be Orange-bellied, then they probably aren't; this species is really quite distinctive.

BREEDING AND MOVEMENTS. It seems that this species breeds only in SW Tasmania and migrates to the SE coast of the mainland between, roughly, Melbourne and the Coorong, leaving Tasmania about late summer and returning in late spring. It has been recorded nesting in tree hollows but may also nest amongst rocks on offshore islands. The bird is obviously rare and it is important that it be reliably recorded if conservation measures are to be enacted on a firm basis.

HABITAT. Appears, like the Rock Parrot, to be essentially a coastal bird though inhabiting coastal grasslands and swampy areas.
(Members may like to join in the hunt. Please report any sightings)

W.V.F.N.C.A. CAMPOUT - MILDURA. Aug. 24th - 26th.

Fourteen members attended the Campout. Due to the distances travelled, many of us arrived far too late to attend the get-together on Friday night.

Saturday was fine and hot. The excursion took us to Hollands Lake, north-west of Mildura. This was originally a small natural lake, but in recent years has been used as an evaporation area for waters which have been pumped from the surrounding orchards and vineyards. This was necessary to lower the water table which was building up as a result of irrigation and threatening to increase the salinity of the farmland. The volume of salty water which flowed into Hollands lake and subsequently evaporated, leaving the salt behind it, has increased the salinity of the lake to 25,000 parts per million. When the water level seasonally drops, it leaves a crystalline jacket of salt, around rushes and shrubs and the skeletons of trees which could not tolerate it. White areas of salted soil surround the lake, and a variety of salt tolerant plants now dominate the immediate surrounds. The lake continues to expand, and there are existing plans to inundate another nearby lake with salt-water and so postpone the problem to another year.

In areas surrounding the lake, the arid area vegetation concealed a mass of bird species. Among the sightings were the crested bellbird, variegated wren, redcapped robin, apostle bird, rufous whistler and fork-tailed kite.

An interesting talk about the problems associated with establishing a bird list for a particular area, followed the delegates meeting. Many people were happy to fill their cots after the previous late night and early morning.

Sunday morning saw some misty rain in very mild, though overcast, weather. An early excursion took us to Trentham cliffs, N.W. of Mildura. Again the dry scrubby country revealed a range of species, though bird sightings were more difficult because of the dull weather. An interesting observation was a nest of cocoanut ants. The strong smell of cocoanut rose up from the nest in the breeze so that it was not necessary to bend to experience its odour.

We had an enjoyable B.B.Q. lunch at Trentham cliffs and a short afternoon excursion in the surrounding country before leaving at mid=afternoon. Many members stayed on in Mildura for extra time.

Rob. Borch.